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from: **THOMSON LOOKS BEYOND WEB  
FUNCTIONALITY TO SELL RCA NC: LOOKS  
TO NETCHANNEL FOR CONTENT  
PARTNERSHIPS****Multimedia Week.** Potomac: Jul 21, 1997. Vol. 6, Iss. 28; pg. 1>> [Jump to indexing \(document details\)](#)

Full Text (500 words)

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Thomson Consumer Electronics Inc. executives plan to play up the ease-of-use, off-line capabilities and electronic programming guide (EPG) included with the RCA NC as the company prepares to launch a product category and do battle with WebTV.

Designed with an EPG that tells users what is playing on their TVs and lets them program their VCRs, Thomson is positioning the hardware as something that takes advantage of the Web but offers services beyond it.

"We think it's a more TV-friendly service {than WebTV}, said Rich Phipps, Thomson's multimedia products manager. "At night this will dial up to NetChannel and update the EPG with relevant information. There is some immediacy you enjoy."

Two versions of the NC (with wired or wireless keyboard) will arrive at retail by September and sell for about \$300 and \$349.

A Network Computer Inc. {ORCL} licensee, the RCA NC is based on the Oracle reference design and will be sold with content-aggregation and Internet services from NetChannel Inc. Zenith Electronics Corp. {ZE} is expected to come out with a consumer-targeted NC later this year, but company officials would not say when it will hit retail.

Given the recent surge in sales of WebTV boxes-from 56,000 units in March to over 100,000 units to date, according to company officials-and the marketing might expected to arrive if and when  Microsoft Corp. {MSFT} gets the government's green light to buy the company, Thomson faces a tough opponent. Thomson officials are hopeful the boxes' EPG, combined with NetChannel-style push technology and distribution strength will translate into sales.

Being able to offer consumers Web content optimized for a particular platform is key to drawing in users. WebTV has made inroads in that area. Music

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company N2K Inc. will develop and maintain a special music retail site exclusively for WebTV subscribers. "We're a consumer network," said Phil Goldman, WebTV co-founder and executive vice president of engineering. "Our business is not to be a technology house."

WebTV has hired former CNN Vice President Stacy Jolna as vice president of programming. Technology Differences On the technology front, the RCA NC offers more memory than WebTV-8 MB of ROM and 5 MB of DRAM compared with the 2 MB of SGRAM, 1 MB Flash ROM and 2 MB Mask ROM-but Goldman said an apples to apples comparison does not reflect the engineering innovations used in the WebTV box.

"We make very efficient use of the memory we have," he said. "There is a lot of caching in the ROM so when we say we have 2 MB we effectively have 4 or 8."

Thomson's NC relies on an 48 MHz ARM 7500 FE processor whereas WebTV uses a 112 MHz Orion MIPS RISC chip.

Both companies support QuickTime and RealAudio 3.0. The NC supports Shockwave and Thomson plans to add support for Flash, which is supported by WebTV, in the future. Neither company's hardware supports VRML or Java. However, WebTV is working feverishly to add PersonalJava to the platform. (Thomson, 317/587-4450; WebTV, 415/326- 3240.)

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[< Previous](#) **Document 8 of 33**  
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